

### “Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association”

The Vietnamese spiritual woman leader Ching Hai developed her meditation method and esoteric knowledge in the 1980's. She appears to have learnt her spiritual path from Thakar Singh, who had the role of Guru at Sawan Asham in Delhi in the late 1970's. Ching Hai founded the “Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association” (with headquarters in Taiwan), a corporate entity that has a media empire as well as restaurants and a fashion business worldwide. The Association also undertakes charitable activities. The Association and Ching Hai – as painter and fashion designer – have a million dollar business, but the source of the wealth is unclear (Thornton 2003).

According to researcher Patricia M. Thornton, the “Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association” relies on the Internet for self-promotion, recruitment and donation, and it can be seen as a transnational ‘cybersect’. See P. M. Thornton, The New Cybersects: Resistance and Repression in the Reform era, in Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden (Eds.), *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2003: 247-270.